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Macleod, J.M.

Pastoral address.

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PASTORAL ADDRESS

BY THE

REV. J. M. MACLEOD,

EDIN. AND GLAS.,

MINISTER OF ST. ANDREW'S CHURCH,

(CHURCH OF SCOTLAND,)

GLENCOE - - - ONTARIO.

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On January 2nd, 1871, in Crown, 8vo., "A Book for My Flock,  
and others who choose to read it."

BY THE REV. J. M. MACLEOD.

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TO THE KIRK SESSION, TRUSTEES, MANAGERS

AND

CONGREGATION OF ST. ANDREW'S CHURCH,

THIS

PASTORAL ADDRESS

IS RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,

WITH THE EARNEST PRAYERS OF THE PASTOR,

J. M. MACLEOD.

GLENCOE, ONTARIO.

JANUARY 1, 1870.



# PASTORAL ADDRESS.

JANUARY 1, 1870.

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MY DEAR CHRISTIAN FRIENDS,

Permit me to address to you a few earnest words in the spirit of tenderness and affection. Entered, as we are, on the first day of a New Year, it is most becoming that we who profess our faith, both in God's infinite love and in His wise providence, should call upon our souls to bless His Holy name, and to magnify His goodness, for all His gracious dealings with us during the year that has just expired. It is, indeed, impossible to give a retrospective view of the past, without feeling deeply sensible of the numerous benefits of which we have been daily the unworthy and ungrateful recipients. Nor can we be blind to the fact that the tender mercies of our God, which extend over all His works, loudly demand the most grateful and unqualified recognition on our part. And if we are alive to our unbounded obligation to Him in whom we live, and move, and have our being—who is at once the mighty guardian of the helpless, the unceasing friend of the needy, the benefactor and powerful preserver of all—our thoughts will spontaneously revert to the unmerited goodness which He has caused to pass before us, the impressions of which ought to be deep and permanent.

Another year of our short life has disappeared, and this is to many a more apparent fact than that they have been fed by the bounty of Jehovah. The precious Sabbaths of the past year have terminated with it. Its priceless privileges and countless blessings are no longer within our reach, and therefore we cannot improve them for time or eternity. But while these seem to have been left far behind, they have at the same time gone very far forward into the invisible future. The terrible records, too, of the past year, with all their important interest, and with innumerable secrets which remain to be told, have already been added to the great annals of eternity, and they shall testify either for us or against us in the notable day of the Lord. That here we have no continuing city—that man is mortal—that time is short—are expressions to which we have been accustomed from our infancy, and they no doubt summon us to pious reflection. We see, indeed, that time, like a gigantic engine, is driving the world onward in an unalterable groove. And in reference to this truly solemn truth, the question is one not of uncertainty, but of duration. The world must indeed come to an end—the great judgment of quick and dead must

come—and the angel must proclaim that there shall be “time no longer.” But the question of duration must have immediate reference to our own existence on this side of the grave, and to the use which we make of our time in this vale of tears. And as we see that there “is none abiding,” but, on the contrary, that “man fleeth as a shadow,” we ought to be wise in the things which are heavenly, and belong to our everlasting peace, as well as prudent in those things that are seen and temporal. For this end also we ought to pray frequently: “Lord, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is; that I may know how frail I am.” “So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.”

Certain it is—for there are no difficulties in the matter—that the year which has just closed has brought us another stage nearer the eternal world from which no pilgrim can return. And whether men are impressed by the fact or not, they are hastening from this world to another, mysterious and awful, and in immediate contiguity to ourselves, rather than placed at a remote distance from us, for death is the boundary line between it and us. But amidst all the vicissitudes and trials of time—under all the sorrows, afflictions, and disappointments with which we are experimentally acquainted—it is our happy experience this day, that, as a Church and as individuals, the loving kindness of the Lord of hosts has not departed from us; and of this a sufficient proof is found in our being still the monuments of His sparing mercy—the living in the place of Hope to give him praise and glory.

As a congregation, it behooves us to acknowledge with profound and sincere gratitude the many cheering and unmistakable evidences which we have that the Holy One of Israel has been our refuge and our strength—that He is still our sun and shield to afford us light and protection—that His glorious presence is with us to comfort and encourage us—that He is fighting our battles, and making our spiritual way prosperous, by making His grace sufficient for us in every time of need. With unfeigned thankfulness, therefore, we would set up our Ebenezer and say: “Hitherto hath the Lord helped us.” And the consciousness that He has done so ought to excite in us purer gratitude, and stir us up to greater activity in His service. It is true that death has deprived us of a few members and hearers, under circumstances well calculated to make us thoughtful about our latter end; but others have come in to fill up their places, and our temple is now filled by reverent and apparently devout worshippers, so that we are not, Sabbath after Sabbath, compelled to look with sorrow at the melancholy spectacle of a sanctuary forsaken—a fold without a flock, and a flock without a pastor. On each Sabbath day, except in rare cases, a more comforting and delightful sight presents itself to our view, and if the state of the heart is in keeping with the praiseworthy decorum of the outward life, we all have cause to be thankful as well as pleased. With commendable regularity the young and the old come up to the house of God, and I trust that in doing so they come to enquire in His temple, to behold the great King in His beauty, and to “worship Him in spirit and in truth.” So far, then, the present condition of the congregation cannot but be gratifying to both pastor and people; and if the congregation has improved in quality as it has increased in numbers and in temporal stability, God be praised for it. If we have really been made new creatures in Christ—if the old heart has been changed, and if we are daily growing in grace



and love, we ought to view all this as most pleasing tokens of divine favour, and of the operation of the Holy Spirit in us. We ought to hail this hopeful state of things with unutterable joy, and render our heartfelt acknowledgments to Him who has commanded His blessing upon us in the house of our pilgrimage. Let us remember who He is, and what is due to Him. He has been to us the God of our being, the loving Father of all our mercies, and the Redeemer of our life from destruction. It is easy, therefore, to perceive that whatever success has attended our labours in the furtherance of the Gospel, and whatever fruit has accompanied or followed our prayers and our preaching, the result, whether single or aggregate, must be attributed to Him who crowneth the spiritual year, as well as the natural, with His goodness. We have planted and watered. We have endeavoured to sow beside all waters, and we may have done all that we *have* done faithfully and diligently, but the increase has come from God who worketh with might in the inner man, disposes our will to obedience, and makes us fruitful in all good works. And I wish those whom I am now addressing to understand this and also to remember it. If you are nourished by the living sap from the true vine, and bearing fruit unto holiness, as your covenant engagements impose on you, and if your whole life is a proof that you are sincerely concerned about the interests of your immortal soul, then you afford me, as your pastor, no small ground of rejoicing, for I cannot have greater joy than to see you all walking in the ways of God, and constantly living for His glory,—ever striving after higher attainments in the heavenly life beyond the grave.

You undoubtedly know that the relation in which I stand to you is one of unspeakable responsibility,—one with which are connected many difficulties and discouragements, which no one but a pastor can fully understand, because no one else knows them as he does. It is not a mere abstract relationship, but one which involves several others, with various ramifications and lessons of the highest import. It is a relationship between an instructor and those whom he teaches; between a pastor and those whom he ought to “feed with knowledge, and understanding;” between a master and those whom he ought to rule “with a faithful and true heart, and prudently with all his power;” between one who is himself the servant of the great Master of the Vineyard and those whose servant he also is for the sake of that Master. No one, therefore, ought to think lightly of this relationship. And it is, permit me to say, a due sense of its vast importance that has led me, at this particular season, to make these remarks, which I trust may not be deemed altogether unsuitable, or even be found unprofitable in our present circumstances. As your spiritual teacher it is my duty to direct and invite you to “the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world,” and to present, explain, and enforce the truth as it is in Jesus; to urge you to “work out your own salvation with fear and trembling;” to “make your calling and election sure;” to warn you against self-righteousness; to lead you to the Cross of Christ; to tell you that He is the “author and finisher of your faith;” that His blood cleanseth from all unrighteousness,” and that there is no “salvation in any other.” As your pastor, it is my duty to watch the current of your feelings, and to seek by seasonable and judicious counsel, to save you from being unawares drawn into the path of the destroyer. As one, therefore, whose duty it is to watch for souls, and as a steward who is bound to be faithful, as one on whom it devolves to give to each one of you his spiritual food in the proper

season, lest you should faint "in the way," I cannot but be solicitous about your eternal happiness and peace. Can I feel at ease if I am under any apprehension that you are in danger? Can I repose with calmness upon my pillow, and enjoy mental tranquillity, if even one of your number has been tempted to renounce, in an evil hour, his Lord and Saviour? If I should witness among you a spirit of back-sliding, rebellion against the Kingdom of Christ, or other sins of like nature, can I refrain from exclaiming, "Horror hath taken hold upon me because of the wicked that forsake Thy law?" Observe that my office is one which brings three parties face to face. I am the servant of Christ for your sake, but not your servant to be lorded over. You are His people, I am His minister and ambassador to bring unto you good tidings of peace. You are His little flock, redeemed by His blood, and I am over you in the Lord to feed you with His living word. Hence I exceedingly fear and tremble, because it is a most solemn thing to stand between the living and the dead. But, because of this relationship, I speak with authority, beseeching you to be reconciled to God, entreating you to consider that "now is the accepted time, the day of salvation." A sound teacher, a faithful steward, a considerate pastor, a kind friend, and a prudent counsellor I must be to you; and as in the day of judgment I must render an account in the presence of holy angels and an assembled universe, I cannot fail to be most anxious lest *your faith and my preaching* should be in vain. Believe me then, when I say, that it now is, and always shall be, my most sincere desire and earnest prayer that you all may be saved, and made eternally blessed, through the peace-speaking blood, the unspotted righteousness, and the soul-sanctifying Spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ, "the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls." And seeing that in Him a sure hope is set before us, let me affectionately exhort you to flee to Him for refuge from the wrath to come, and tenderly invite you to the zealous and constant cultivation of those heavenly graces which exalt the Christian and adorn his life with spiritual beauty. For the protection of your religious faith, and for the safety of your souls from "the wiles of the devil," "put on the whole armour of God." Be "shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace." "Quench not the Spirit" by your opposition. "Pray without ceasing." Live always in that pure atmosphere which surrounds the people of God. Cleave to Jesus "with full purpose of heart." Be always ready to testify that He is good and that His love is precious above all jewels; and, as His people for whom He shed His blood, "be stedfast" and "unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord." Let your purpose to stand on the Rock of Ages be firm, so that nothing can remove you. Let your prayers, dictated by the Spirit, ascend to the throne of God. Pray that He would be pleased to give you His holy Spirit, to the end that you may be enabled to bring forth the fruits of good living, denying yourselves all ungodliness, and all worldly lusts. Pray mightily with all "supplication in the Spirit," that all iniquity, as ashamed, may hide its face, and that righteousness may run down our streets like a river. Pray fervently that "the Lord of the whole earth" may visit His people—that in the exercise of His infinite love He may send "seasons of refreshing," and make them revive as the corn,—make His grace "as the dew unto" His spiritual "Israel," and cause His glory to dwell in our land. Let this be your prayer, and let it be mine also, otherwise we have no just reason to expect that the Lord will cause His work to prosper in our hand. We cannot expect

God to take pleasure in our best services if we are constantly resisting Him, and if we are increasing the desolations of Zion instead of repairing them, and planting thorns where the rose should grow. And what would all the world be to us supposing it were our undisputed portion, in the absence of the divine favour and blessing, which make rich and add no sorrow? What enjoyment can we have amidst all the grandeur, pomp, luxury, influence, power and riches of the world, if we do not possess a saving interest in Christ, and have not that piety which, while it exalteth a nation, is the highest glory of the individual believer? And let me here remark that a careful view of all the considerations submitted above, makes my anxiety about your eternal welfare more and more intense. While, therefore, I cannot but rejoice at finding myself surrounded by a large, respectable, and devoted congregation, of whose strong and individual attachment I have already received so many substantial proofs, I shall be still more gladdened by the assurance that, under my ministry, you are daily growing in the knowledge of Christ crucified, and in meetness for heaven, for I regard it as of far more importance every way that you should be Christ's people, without spot or blemish, than that I should be gratified by seeing crowds attending my public services, for I am sent to save souls, not to convert men to a creed or church. And, therefore, with this feeling inspiring me, my highest wish must ever be, and certainly is, that you may be "my joy and crown" in the day of the Lord, when He shall bring His sons from far, and His daughters from the ends of the earth. To this end I must labour with all fidelity and diligence, praying day and night that you and I may be saved by the same mighty sacrifice, enlightened by the same gospel, and sanctified by the same spirit, so that I may present you perfect in Christ Jesus, in the day of His appearing. For this all momentous end, it will be my constant and persevering endeavor, in humble dependence on Divine aid, to preach to you, to the best of my ability, the Law and the Gospel, without any mixture of error, conscientiously declaring unto you the whole "counsel of God," faithfully "warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom." And this part of my work, fraught, as it really is, with such tremendous consequences, I shall always seek to perform in a spirit of Christian love and affection, so that the word of God may not, on my account, be evil spoken of. I will not disturb your minds by introducing into my pulpit ministrations unnecessary controversies or discussions, either theological or political, or by indulging in bitter tirades against other churches, for the Gospel, unto the ministry of which I am called, is emphatically "the Gospel of peace." Neither must I preach for doctrine the commandments of men, nor fail to place Christ above the Church and all authorities and powers. Pulpit warfare is never productive of good results; and the Sabbath day is not sanctified by fighting. And even in preaching, the house of God must not be "made a den of thieves." I will, therefore, strive to instruct you in the spirit of one whose mission is peace. Nor, while on the one hand I resolve to give due attention to my own studies, and to explore every path of knowledge, both human and divine, that I may be the better able to instruct and edify those who hear me, will I neglect the very necessary duty of parochial visitation. I feel that this is a most important part of a Christian minister's work, and I trust, therefore, that I shall not be a stranger in the dwellings of those whom I know to be suffering in the furnace of affliction. These call for my sympathy as well as for my prayers, and I

will come to them with a message of comfort from the Great Physician, who alone can heal. I will visit the chambers of the sick, in season or out of season, according as propriety may dictate, and as circumstances may require.

Neither again shall I lose sight of an object which has always been most dear to my heart, and which demands your attention as well as mine. I mean the education and right training of the young. My divine Master has commanded me to feed the lambs of His flock; and how guilty I must be if I do not use the most strenuous efforts to promote their everlasting interests! Can I be satisfied with myself if I omit precious opportunities of bringing the young to Christ? They are the objects of His special love, they shall also be the objects of my constant attention. No effort, indeed, shall be wanting on my part to diffuse among them that knowledge without which all other is utterly useless—I mean the knowledge of salvation, through the finished work of Christ. I am always ready to impart to them those salutary lessons which I believe are best calculated to give stability and consistency to their principles and character; and I ask parents to send their children to our Sabbath Schools, and Bible Classes. These, let me remind you, are excellent nurseries of religious training, where the youthful mind is taught to reverence the Bible, and is led to dwell with complacency on the love of Christ to a fallen world. And it is well when this contemplation of the divine work, as carried on by Christ in human redemption, becomes with them the daily habit of their life. Inasmuch, therefore, as bible teaching, properly conducted, has a direct tendency to produce this habit in the young, I would earnestly solicit your assistance in every way in which it can be rendered available in carrying on successfully the useful and honourable work of Sabbath School teaching, with a special view to benefit the young. This work involves a combination of interests and agencies, and therefore united and spirited efforts are needed in carrying it on with any chance of satisfactory results. Give me then what I now ask. Give me your help on behalf of the young; and if you deny me everything else in this matter, at least give me your prayers. From this subject, however, let me direct your thoughts to another.

I have a serious question to ask, and I wish you to answer it in the secret of your heart. What have I been doing for the benefit of those of maturer years? Has not Christ said "Feed my Sheep?" Has this been done by me? Have I faithfully pressed on your acceptance the bread of life, from which alone you could derive spiritual nourishment? And is the life which you now live in the flesh a life of faith in the Son of God, who loved you, and gave himself for you? Is it not time, indeed, that I should look for a blessing on my ministry among you? When I look into your life for the fruits of righteousness, shall I find you barren and unfruitful? Shall I find that the house has not been built,—that the city has not been kept? Shall I discover, from painful facts, that the builder has builded in vain, and that the watchman has watched to no purpose? Let me anticipate a different and far more pleasing result.

It is now two years since God in His Providence cast my lot in this corner of His vineyard. Being your own unanimous choice, I came to you in the fulness of hope. I naturally looked forward to a pleasant intercourse with you, and I rejoice to say that it has not been interrupted in a single instance. This harmony, too, is greatly enhanced by the very cordial feeling with which all other Denominations have uniformly treated me. All this has made my work among

you exceedingly agreeable, and has largely contributed to the happiness of my life, which considerations render it all the more reasonable that I should now look for some fruit, which may sufficiently show that you have not received the grace of God in vain.

Whatever encouragement I had to cheer me when I became your Pastor, I felt that "I came not to you with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God." Nevertheless, "I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ, and Him Crucified." And to this determination I shall cling as long as I live, pointing my hearers to that cross around which the streams of salvation so freely and fully flow. "I was with you in weakness and in fear, and in much trembling," as a "bruised reed" that had no strength. I saw before me the difficulties of a new field, and I asked myself in my solitude, "Who is sufficient for these things?" I felt too, how greatly I stood in need of patience, fortitude, faith, prayer, heavenly wisdom, and the grace of God. Now, if I entered upon my work among you with a full knowledge of the perplexities and hindrances that surround the ministerial office, and if I was persuaded that my help must come from the Lord who made heaven and earth, then have I acted as a wise master builder, and have I sternly lifted up the voice on the watch towers of Zion? What, for example, have I done to build you up in your most holy faith? What have I done to confirm you in the hope of eternal life, through the death and resurrection of Christ? To all this I answer, that, whether my preaching has been with demonstration and with power, or whether it has answered no good purpose, I can say in truth that your salvation is the great object which I have had in view. I have therefore preached to benefit, not to please. And not being afraid of any man, I could lose nothing by offending him through faithful and direct preaching. I have mingled reproof with entreaty, and warning with encouragement. In all my public discourses I have tried to use great boldness, and also great plainness of speech; and I have studied to the best of my ability to exhibit to you the Saviour of sinners as he is "freely offered in the Gospel." But how awful is the thought that my sermons, lectures, and devotional exercises, may have been only like the morning cloud and early dew, or the sounding brass and the tinkling cymbal! How terrible to think that they may have been empty sounds, without unction, and destitute of all efficacy! No doubt, much of what has been sown has fallen by the way-side; much has fallen on stony ground; and much too has fallen among thorns. My sincerity in all that I have written and spoken for the spiritual good of my flock, could not prevent such a result; and He alone who can solve the problem of what is hidden from our eyes, knows how much seed, whether any seed at all, has fallen into good ground. But even granting that the fruit is thirty fold, or sixty fold, or a hundred fold, I cannot divest myself of the thought that a great deal is yet to be done, and that there is much fallow ground which requires careful and diligent cultivation. There is, I fear, ground that has often been turned up, but never sown in reality. And in view of my feeble efforts to build up the cause of our blessed Saviour in the midst of you, I am profoundly impressed with the fact, that, after all, I have been an unprofitable servant, and that, with respect to my own short-comings, I have just cause to mourn. It is, however, consolatory to reflect, that it has always been my great desire and aim to lead you to Christ,—to see you established,

rooted and grounded in faith and love. At no time have I been actuated by mercenary motives in the performance of my duty ; nor have I, under any circumstances, been influenced by the fear of man. I have accordingly declared unto you the name of Jesus, who "is precious unto them that believe," because He is made unto them "of God, wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." Pray then that I may still be supported by divine grace to go on in the faithful discharge of my duties, proving myself to be, both for the glory of Christ and your spiritual good and everlasting peace, "a workman who needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." Pray likewise that my knowledge, so far as it extends, may in every instance be accompanied by true zeal for the glory of God, who willeth not the death of the sinner, and plead for the sake of those over whom He has made me an overseer, that He would be pleased to endue me with grace, and make me mighty in the scripture, so that, denying myself, and becoming "all things unto all men," I may be made instrumental in saving some. Let me not commit among you the sin of being grossly selfish, or indulging in covetousness, which is idolatry. Let me not degrade my sacred office by an inordinate love of filthy lucre. Let me not waste my time in seeking my own, for what *can* I gain if *you* are not *saved*? When I enter your homes to sympathise with the suffering, and administer consolation to the dying, let me carry with me a lively sense of the humility and devotedness, the fearlessness and prudence, the learning and experience, the piety and holiness, the gentleness and earnestness, the courteousness and firm-bearing which are absolutely required in those who would fill the ministerial and pastoral office creditably and usefully. Such is the spirit that I pray God may characterize my intercourse with you in public and in private. And may our periodical meeting in the sanctuary be an earnest of our meeting in the house of many mansions—"the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

*Unity of feeling.* I exhort you, dearly beloved, to remember that Christ has made of twain one, so making peace. Remember that there is but "one Lord, one faith, one baptism." Remember that Christ is not divided. His flock also is one though His folds are many. Consider what He said—"other sheep have I which are not of this fold." "The household of faith," whose "names are written in heaven," is one family, and Christ is the Head of it; for He is the "Head over all things unto the Church." "Hold fast, therefore, the profession of your faith without wavering," and live in the "unity of the Spirit and in the bond of peace." I exhort you to be "of one mind," and in all matters tending to advance your best interests as a Christian congregation "to think the same thing." Let not only minister and people exercise mutual good feeling and confidence, but let there be a holy rivalry among yourselves in promoting the cause of the Redeemer. Be as one in heart, as one in love, as one in counsel, as one in faith, as one in hope.

*Christian toleration.* Endeavor likewise, dear friends, by the calm exercise of brotherly love, to conciliate those of your fellow parishioners, who do not worship along with you, and who from conscientious scruples on certain points of secondary importance, think differently from yourselves. Respect not only their feelings but even their opinions. Consider that whether they are right or wrong in the views which they hold, to their own Master they stand or fall. Act, therefore, on the wise principle laid down by the Apostle, and so "let every man

be fully persuaded in his own mind." Be at peace with all men, and cherish, with me, that broad and liberal spirit which embraces within its range the whole brotherhood of mankind. Study to form a just appreciation of those who belong to other branches of the Christian church, and do not regard them as if no relation existed between them and yourselves. And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness, and let "the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body, and be ye thankful." Let your conversation among your fellow-men be such as becometh the gospel. Shine as lights in the world. Let others see by your works that your hearts have been changed. Show by your lives that your citizenship is in heaven, and that consequently you may feel interested in the well being of every section of Christ's church. Do not merely exercise the rights of hospitality towards those that are without, but love the brethren, even those "who are far off," as well as those who are "near." May we all, as pastor and flock, and as neighbours also, be prayerful, watchful and circumspect, living always to the glory and honour of God, that we may hereafter participate in the "fullness of joy that is in His presence, and in the pleasures which are at His right hand for evermore!" And now Christian friends, whom I call to witness this day, that I have not refrained from preaching to you the truth in all simplicity, and in all boldness, I commend you to "the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fulness of God." Finally, may "grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, according as His divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him that hath called us to glory and virtue."

Thus far I have only spoken in pretty general terms. In the sequel of this address I must descend to particulars. There are various subjects of considerable interest and importance which I might, with advantage, introduce to your notice, but which cannot possibly be discussed within the compass of a short pastoral address intended only for my own flock. I can therefore do little more at present than throw out a few hints.

Let me then observe, at this stage, that I should like to see your attention aroused in reference to the religious life of the present generation. I should like to see thought and investigation called forth among you. I should like to see you watch the progress of events. I should like you to mark carefully the educational movements of the day, because these involve great principles,—to keep in sight the tide of public opinion in regard to religious institutions,—to notice the development of criticism, and to follow with keen observation the researches which are at present being made in the science of theology. The world is at this moment agitated about questions affecting faith and morals, and if the age in which we are living is not largely infidel, it is, to say the least, tremendously secular. I wish you to look at these palpable facts, and to examine them for your own information.

There is abroad, among high and low, not only a remarkable freedom of thought, but also of expression and action. This freedom is expanding fast. It pervades every grade of society. Men carry it with them into the examination of divine truth. The Bible is no longer approached with a superstitious awe, but men who profess to be pious, and to be scientific enquirers, take it up and criticise it, either on historical or literary grounds, or both, precisely as they

would do with any other piece of composition. Under this pretence of making the truth more plain to the ignorant, a thousand improbabilities have been suggested, which, however, a pious mind, as if moved by an instinctive impulse, will at once reject. If you therefore wish to meet infidel objections, and desire to resist the encroachments of secularism on the domain of religious truth, search the Scriptures critically, that you may not be accused of being led by a blind and traditional faith. Doctrines and principles which your fathers did not call in question are now being sifted by acute and enquiring minds, ingenious arguments are adduced against them, and in many cases their very foundation is threatened, and this renders it necessary that you should be scribes "well-instructed into the kingdom." The spirit of enquiry has, in many instances, become vulgarly bold, defiant and arrogant. It is now challenging existing institutions, and setting aside the long-cherished truths which have hitherto been the strongest bulwark of the Christian world and the greatest security to the stability of society. Socialism is leading a wretched life of righteous incarceration in dusty garrets, damp cellars, crowded alleys, and obscure lanes. But, frowned down as it is by respectability and decency, it is actively working out in the dark its abominable principles. And besides all this, the sacred laws of property are no longer respected by a very great mass of the people, who have sworn terrible vengeance against that only form of government which God was pleased to approve and consecrate in the days of old. With such startling facts before us it is our duty to defend, at any cost, the principles of our holy religion, and to maintain them in their integrity. Sceptical philosophy, secular Utilitarianism, cold Rationalism, and political expediency, are now pressing their respective claims on the world's homage; and honour and virtue, which were once priceless, are now sold to the highest bidder. Materialism too, is growing in strength and magnitude, and struggling hard to bring the human mind into subjection to its principles. All these powers exist and operate in a sphere of their own. They are persistent and selfish in the furtherance of their own ends. They desire to command the acquiescence of mankind, and to possess those means by which they can most easily ascend to supreme power. You cannot therefore expect them to be the friends of pure and undefiled religion. On the contrary, they are most formidable opponents to the Church of God, which they are now trying in various ways to injure. "They have broken down her hedges; and the boar out of 'his seat of power' doth waste her." Now, it is clearly your duty, as a Christian people, to oppose all this evil,—to make a firm stand on the side of truth, and to resist and crush out sophistry, hypocrisy, ungodliness and human selfishness. And in order to be prepared for every emergency, I beseech you to study the Word of God, which will furnish you with the best weapons for defending your faith, and with the best means for giving "a reason of the hope that is in you." It is the want of individual study of that blessed Word, that leaves so many exposed to temptation, and makes them the ready and helpless victims of "every wind of doctrine." Study, therefore, individually, "the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." You who are parents ought to see that your children study them,—you who are masters ought to see that your servants study them; and let all those who know the truth experimentally strive to impress others with the paramount importance of God's Word, as "a lamp unto the feet, and a light unto the path."



*Family Worship.* On this subject, though it is one of considerable moment, I need not say a great deal, and simply because you all admit, not only the propriety of it, but also the necessity of maintaining it regularly in your families. Family worship is a part of your duty, and you know very well that duty cannot be neglected with safety. It is, however, a melancholy fact that many people do neglect this duty *entirely*; and why they do so may be easily accounted for. The reason of this shameful contempt and negligence is the want of divine grace in the heart. And when the heart is not under divine influence there is no nearness to God in Spirit. Nor, indeed, can there be that pouring of the fulness of Christ into the emptiness of the soul, which makes the pardoned sinner feel that he is the "blessed" man, "whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered, —unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile." It is not by any means a satisfactory explanation to plead a want of time, because our time, as well as our services, belongs to God. Worldly riches and success in business are far less important than eternal life. The universe would be no gain to that unhappy man who, through the deceitfulness of riches, loses his own soul. "The body is more than raiment." "Life is more than meat." So the soul is so precious that nothing on earth can be put in comparison with it. Does it not require daily bread? Why then deny it the manna of family worship? Give to God your best affections, and let nothing interfere with those religious services, which you, as Christian families, ought to render to Him morning and evening. Do not imagine that the short time devoted to such services is lost, or that your business suffers from them. On the contrary, to live godly hath the "promise of the life that now is, and also "of that which is to come." And so you may, with far greater reason, expect God's blessing, by acting like Joshua, who said, "As for me and my house we will serve the Lord."

*Parental Authority.* In connection with the above remarks, on the duty of family worship, let me say a few words on the subject of parental authority. I am greatly afraid, and with good reason, that parental authority is not so fully respected as it ought to be. But for this widely prevalent disease there is certainly a remedy if parents choose to apply it. I fear that the young are lamentably deficient in filial piety. The "pious Æneas" is rare. In no respect is parental authority so little regarded as in the matter of religion. Still, the cure must be applied here as well as in other forms of the disease. And God's grace alone is able to restore health, and bend the young will to submission. Parental authority is a point on which you must insist. God has given you a station to fill, and you have a work to do in it. Take care then that your parental authority, which is derived from God, is not misdirected on your part, or abused by your children; and remember that you ought to enforce it by your example, in "a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price." Insist on obedience, but do so on the principle of love and justice. Exclude harshness, cruelty and bitterness. If your example is contrary to your precept, the latter is rendered null and void by the contrariety. It is in vain that you "teach" your "children and command" your "household," in respect to the things that are heavenly, or those that pertain to a virtuous life, if your example is the opposite of what you teach and command. If you wish them to "keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment," back your authority in the domestic circle by a holy life. There is no Logic against facts, and your eloquence is powerless, when your

inconsistency is observed by your children. They have a Logic of their own ; and so have servants. Both are far more shrewd than you are aware, and have a special aptitude for the detecting of certain fallacies. It is thus that the school-master has been often put into a corner instead of the pupil whom he meant to punish ; and that even earnest preaching has too frequently fallen on the ear without leaving an impression on the heart. You need not therefore be surprised, if you sometimes find your power in the family materially weakened, or if you discover that the respect and honour which are due to you, are either reluctantly accorded to you, or partially, if not wholly, withheld from you. Teach your family, therefore, as much by the example of a godly and consistent life, as by the precepts of the moral Law. Rule with firmness, but let your firmness be tempered by kindness. Enforce your parental authority legitimately ; but take care that you do not counteract it by provoking unnecessary opposition, or by injudiciously exposing some weak points in your system of domestic government. But above all, use your authority aright in training up your children "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." Teach them to "remember their Creator in the days of their youth," by showing them that you remember Him in your old age.

*Personal Religion.* This is a thing of unspeakable importance. It is a subject which equally concerns all classes of men. A great show of religious formality is a miserable substitute for individual piety. And yet it is to be feared that the evil prevails to a very great extent. The rising and setting of the sun are not more familiar to our senses. We cannot be religious for other people, and others cannot be religious for us. "None can redeem his brother, or give to God a ransom for him." If therefore you desire to be good in the sight of God, you must possess that personal piety which is the best proof of real conversion. You must not be content with "having the form of godliness" without its "power." Heavenly words and pious expressions will not answer the purpose. You may cry "Lord, Lord," and yet be destitute of personal holiness. Nay, you may cry as loud as the priests of Baal on Carmel, and after all have no true piety. Vital piety in the heart is the surest test of your being a child of God. Mere excitement, ejaculations and protestations go for nothing. You might have a priest in your family to offer sacrifice, and a preacher after your own heart, to preach to you in accordance with your own wishes and notions, but that would be useless without the godliness of the inner life to which the Spirit of the Most High giveth being. See then, I pray, that you are under "the powers of the world to come," that you really feel the power of true religion in the soul, and that you have in you that living faith by which you shall appropriate the Saviour as your portion in time and eternity. Personal religion will mark your interest in Christ, and will lead you both to do and suffer much for His sake. It will shine in the devotional services of the family, but it will also lead you silently to your closet, to commune in secret with "your Father who is in Heaven." It is truly unlike the piety which some people so successfully contrive to borrow for special occasions, and which they can so conveniently lay aside when worldly interests assert supremacy over the corrupt and unbelieving heart. Personal religion has marked the people of God in all ages, even from "righteous Abel" to the present time.—It is still the same prominent characteristic of those who have been born again, and have taken the "Kingdom by violence." Let it likewise mark the con-

stancy of *your* faith, the reality of *your* Christianity, the holiness of *your* conduct, and the energy of the divine life within you.

"*The assembling of* yourselves *together.*" In the faithful performance of this great duty we see the spirit of family devotion and personal religion manifesting itself. That father who worships God in the family, loves to worship Him in the sanctuary, and the individual believer who pours out his soul's most earnest devotions in the closet, loves to "ascend the hill of God," to worship Him publicly "in the beauties of holiness." And how pleasant it would be—how well for the cause of Christ—if those who profess His holy religion would, in the holy spirit of the 122 psalm, encourage each other to "go up into the house of the Lord!" But you know that there is a widely different spirit rampant even among religious professors. You see multitudes absenting themselves from God's house, without being able to assign the slightest reason why they do so. I see it as well as you do, and probably I mourn over it more deeply than you do. But are you not sometimes, at least, encouraging the evil by your own example? Whether this is so or not, one thing is certain, namely, that the soul requires to be fed with daily food from the Lord. And where can the soul be better nourished than in the sanctuary? Can you forget that the sanctuary is God's house, even "the place where his honour dwelleth?" Can you forget that He "loves the gates of Sion more than all the dwellings of Jacob?" Can you forget that Thomas, by being absent from the number of the disciples when the risen Saviour appeared amongst them, was guilty of the sin of unbelief? Can you forget that "the Lord opened the heart of Lydia" when she "went on the Sabbath" day "to the place where prayer was wont to be made!" Or are you strangers to the fact that the Sabbath services of the sanctuary, if properly engaged in by the people, and wisely conducted by the minister, afford spiritual nourishment and comfort? Remember that the soul, if deprived of these, will soon languish, and grow utterly indifferent about "the deep things of God." Regular attendance at Church on the Lord's day is surely as necessary to the healthy condition of the soul, as punctuality in worldly things during the week is to success in business. And I remind you that the affairs of this life receive the most scrupulous attention from many who seem not to feel that the momentous duties of the Sabbath day have any claim on their consideration? Alas! the too prevalent neglect of the public services of that day is palpable enough, and cannot be disputed. But why should the evil seem to grow instead of decreasing, in an age in which the world boasts of progress, improvement and enlightenment? This question, however, involves considerations on which I cannot dwell here, but which may, in some measure, suggest themselves to you, if you carefully examine the tendencies of present movements in the moral and religious world. Look at these movements, not indeed in the abstract, but either as they stand related to each other, or severally refer to something which is not as yet well defined. And take care that amidst the prevailing chaos you are not deceived by the outward aspect of affairs in the religious communities which make up the numerical aggregate of the universal Church. Be fully on your guard against the secret invasion of ungodly habits; and so bear in mind your duty to your God and to yourselves, that you cannot be reproached with the sin of "forsaking the assembling of yourselves together as the manner of some is."

*Prayer meetings.* These may be held both on the Lord's day and on week days. Their utility has been amply confirmed by experience. They are frequently to the sanctuary what tributaries are to a river. They are, so to speak, feeders whose spiritual overflowings have been seen and felt in ten thousand instances. It is impossible indeed, to over estimate their value. They have made the poor rich, and comforted the afflicted. They have renewed the aged with youthful vigour, and strengthened the weak with might. In their simple and earnest exercises many a bereaved and sorrowing heart—many a lonely widow and friendless orphan—and many a penitent, seeking reconciliation with his Heavenly Father, found soul-delights of which the world is ignorant. And what they have been in the past, they are now—excellent means of doing good. You ought therefore to take an interest in promoting such religious meetings as these. They have a strong claim on your consideration, because they tend to strengthen the cause of Christ among yourselves, as well as to encourage others in works of faith and love. And if piously and judiciously conducted, prayer meetings are well fitted to answer these ends. But while thus setting before you the importance and benefits of prayer meetings, I wish to make one remark to which I beg to call your particular attention. It is this: Who is to conduct the congregational prayer meetings? I anticipate your answer. At least, I believe that most of you are ready to say that the duty devolves entirely on the minister. No doubt it does so chiefly, but not altogether—other agencies are available. He ought therefore to be assisted in this work by the elders, or even other godly men belonging to the congregation. Moses was a mediator as well as a law-giver. It once became his duty to go up to the top of a hill to do some very important work there. He grew weary, as men generally do after long toil and hard labour. His hands became feeble. In these circumstances Aaron and Hur came to his assistance, and he found help even in a stone. Why should there not be men in every congregation, on whose ready and willing aid the minister might always depend? Alas! he is expected to hold up his hands from "early morn to dewy eve," while his hearers feel no shame in folding theirs. Are there no stones on which he may repose when a pressure of duty weighs him down heavily? Alas! he has more frequently to lean on straws for aid than to sit on stones for support. This is discouraging enough; but it cannot be denied that such a state of things exists in too many of our congregations. In fact he is regarded by too many as a man of all-work—a hired man, who must do every one's bidding. It is only the strong-minded man that can escape from such a pressure, and save himself from popular dictation. But why should one man be required to accomplish so much, while those who could aid him take no interest in his work? Nor is this all. Not only are the singing, the prayers, and the sermon, regarded as his special work, but the building of manses, and the repairing of churches are too frequently laid on his shoulders.

*The eldership.* In connection with the remarks made immediately above, let me say a few words regarding the eldership. What kind of office is this, and what sort of men ought to hold it? I merely suggest this question for the serious consideration of those whom it may concern. I cannot enter on the discussion of it in this place. But one thing is evident enough, and may be remarked here, without giving offence to the most sensitive, namely, that our Church, in ordaining men of good report to the eldership, has certainly some-

thing more in view than the periodical attendance of these worthy gentlemen at the celebration of the Holy Communion. She does not conceive of their office as being merely nominal, and as having no importance or significance attached to it. She does not therefore wish to appoint to this office men who might be prompted by unworthy motives to accept of it, or might rather feel disposed to push themselves into it. On the contrary, she is cautious in selecting and deliberate in appointing men to serve as elders, and she does not consent to ordain them till she has satisfactory evidence of their fitness. It is a settled question, therefore, that the elders of a congregation must be something more than nominal functionaries, of whom nothing more is required than to appear at certain seasons, elegantly clothed in priestly blacks, and adorned with a white neck-tie. This has indeed been insinuated by those who refuse to admit that the office of the eldership has any Scriptural authority for its existence in the Christian Church. But the insinuation is a libel on a class of men to whose intelligence and disinterested services the Church of the Redeemer is greatly indebted,—men comprising nobles of the highest order, educated men of the greatest talents, merchants of princely wealth, and peasants of simple but elevated piety. It cannot be said that the elders are chosen on account of any personal advantages connected with their rank, for even the poor man, as well as the rich, may hold this office if he is otherwise duly qualified. Their office is one of grave responsibility, and their duties are very important. From these two facts it is quite evident that the elders ought to be men of good understanding, sound judgment and great prudence,—men possessing a profound knowledge of the Scriptures,—men “full of faith and the Holy Ghost,”—men of liberal hearts and of large Christian sympathy. Their duties are mainly of a spiritual character, and they are required to be spiritually-minded. They are expected to be able to give wise counsels; to act as mediators in certain cases; to aid the pastor in his visitation; and otherwise to strengthen his hands, by conducting prayer-meetings, and superintending Sabbath-schools; and finally, by assisting in the devout and orderly dispensation of the Lord’s Supper. The elders ought to be men of meekness and charity, free from pride and arrogance, maintaining good discipline in their respective sections of the congregation, without being too eager to find a brother in fault. It belongs to them likewise to rule their families well, commanding respect by their dignified and holy example, showing under all circumstances that they possess the fear and love of God, and that they are under the quickening power of divine truth. As God-fearing men, loving peace, and hating strife, and desiring to see “all things done decently and in order,” they can do much to promote both the temporal and spiritual welfare of a congregation. They are not necessarily excluded from taking an active part in whatever is best calculated to advance the temporal prosperity of a congregation. On the contrary, they may, if they wish, be of considerable service in this respect,—and indeed ought to be.

*The Congregational Managers.* I would class these useful men (at least it is intended that they should be useful), next to the elders. These functionaries ought to be selected from the wisest and best men in a congregation. Every congregation ought to have seven such officers. They ought to be appointed annually by the congregation, two of the number retiring by rotation, and two of them acting as Convener and Secretary respectively. They ought to meet quar-

terly, and oftener if necessary, for the transaction of temporal business; and in order to give effect to their proceedings every meeting ought to be duly intimated from the pulpit, ten free days before such meeting. The nature of the business ought to be specified in the intimation, and no business not so specified in it, ought to be introduced or discussed at the meetings. A careful record of all proceedings at Managers' meetings ought to be kept, and a printed report of revenue and expenditure, &c., ought to be laid before the congregation at its annual meeting. The Managers ought to be men in full communion. Their power to do good, if they wish to use their power aright, is very great. But so is their power to do harm, if they are factious, or selfish, or covetous, or wish to turn things upside down when they do not get all things their own way. And indeed it is to be deeply regretted that church-managers are too frequently men of this stamp—lovers of praise—always contrary, and flippantly boasting of the great services which they have rendered to the Church. This, however, is not the case when the managers are men of faith and energy, men of enlightened views and large-heartedness, as well as men of honour and piety. They ought to feel that their office is one of usefulness, and not one for the display of self-importance and honourable idleness. It is their special duty to look well after the finances of the congregation, to see that the minister is punctually and fully paid, and to encourage, by their own generous example, a spirit of liberality among the people in supporting the cause of Missions. And as it is well known that much depends on wise management, the managers are required to act with great discretion and judgment. When they are inactive, or feel no interest in their work, or are influenced by petty jealousies, they paralyse, obstruct, and hinder, instead of helping. Great care therefore ought to be taken in electing managers. No man who is narrow-minded, or has low views of the ministerial office, and talks of hiring a minister like a cook or a farm-servant, and thus refuses to give to an educated clergyman that temporal support to which he is so justly entitled, or withholds from him that respect which every one ought to show him, ought to have anything to do with Church matters, either temporal or spiritual, till his views shall have been entirely changed, and the unclean spirit of covetousness shall have been cast out. There is, indeed, no greater hindrance to the progress of a congregation than an obstructive manager, who always carries his political notions of retrenchment in his pocket Bible,—does not see the necessity of doing anything, or of giving anything,—wishes to leave things as they have been, or to make them even worse than they are,—has no earnest longing after improvement, and cannot be made to understand that there is any relation existing between religion and money. It is a very bad policy to “muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn,” and a wrong thing to forget that “God loveth a cheerful giver.” It only remains to be remarked that the managers ought to co-operate heartily with the minister and Kirk Session, in promoting the best interests of the congregation at large. It is their duty to see that the Church is properly ventilated and properly heated, so that the people can sit in it with comfort; and it also belongs to them to see that their place of worship is in every respect made worthy of Him to whose service it has been dedicated.

*Liberality in supporting the ministry.* This is a subject which addresses itself to all alike. No one who wishes to be ranked within the pale of the Christian Church can claim exemption from it. You, for whose benefit I am more

especially writing these sentences, are called upon to illustrate this Christian principle in the most practical form, for theories of Christianity without practice are of no use. You are not therefore to sit down and calculate how little you are to give, but you ought to go on your knees to ask God to grant you a giving heart. A withholding-heart is like a rusty lock. It is difficult to open it, and when it is actually opened it is in danger of being broken. See then that you possess that free heart, which is easily opened by every appeal to maintain Ordinances according to the rules laid down in the New Testament. The Christian ministry has a strong claim on your support. You owe much to the salutary influences which it exercises over society. Be not therefore deceived by the sophistry of those who affirm that the Church has neither influence nor power. She has both. Your fathers knew this and told you of it. And you are this day partakers of the same inestimable benefits. What then does the Church expect from you? Is she to do all for you while you do nothing for her? Is it right only to receive and not also to give? Has the Church "nourished and brought up children," and are they unwilling to do anything for her in return? She asks you to give, and in that she is only doing her duty. She does not impose upon you a yoke which you cannot bear. She merely asks you to give according as God has blessed you. There is surely no injustice in this demand. It is very reasonable. God has given largely to many of you—to most of you—and it is your duty to give Him back a reasonable proportion of His own. He has given you the ministry of reconciliation, but you are not at liberty to starve it out by denying it the support which you ought to give it. The ministry has not been instituted for the exclusive benefit of priests or prophets, but for the salvation and comfort of mankind. It is for the benefit of poor and guilty sinners of every class. It is therefore a thing in which you are quite as much interested as the minister who preaches to you. It is for you not less than it is for him. The spiritual board which it provides is spread for you. Your desire therefore to extend Christ's kingdom ought to be outwardly shown by the liberality of your contributions, and more particularly by your willingness to contribute. Plough, and sow, and reap, every year a certain portion of your land, and offer the proceeds to the God of Ordinances, for the support of the ministry. Call that spot your mission field. The Lord will bless it and make it rich like the land of Goshen, with fruitful showers and bright sun-shine. Let a corner be consecrated in this way to *His* service, to whom the earth and its fulness appertain. Let the merchant and the mechanic act on a similar principle, in regard to their respective incomes, in their willing endeavour to maintain the public ministry of the word. Now, you ought to hail it as a cause of thankfulness, that, as a congregation, your resources are amply sufficient to provide for every legitimate demand. Not one of you is poor in the sense in which thousands are. And let me assure you that I am willing to believe in your readiness to give liberally of your worldly substance, towards the efficient maintenance of Gospel Ordinances in your more immediate neighbourhood, and also of active missionary operations throughout the Church to whose principles and government you adhere. Having been for eight years without a settled ministry, you are supposed to be in a position to appreciate the great advantages of a fixed pastorate. You are no longer dependent on occasional services, or left in vexing uncertainty as to when a stray missionary may come your way. The time when

many of you must have felt that anxiety, has passed away. "Your vine and your fig-tree" flourish, and you may now sit in their shade, "none daring to hurt you or make you afraid." You can now look forward from Sabbath to Sabbath to the sweet hour of public worship, when, instead of being as sheep without a shepherd, you assemble together to hear the lively oracles of God. Let your deep sense of these great mercies evoke your gratitude, not only in the pious expression of praise, but also by the hearty consecration of your wealth to the cause of Christ. "Freely ye have received, freely give." And lastly, consider the Saviour's words—"It is more blessed to give than to receive."

*A missionary spirit.* Next in order let me call your attention to this subject. The Christian Church, as you are fully aware, is a great Missionary Association, and each congregation, as a part of the universal Institution, ought to consider itself bound by those laws which govern and regulate the whole. It ought to show that it is inspired by a missionary spirit, by illustrating the power and mutual relations of these laws.

But it is difficult to make people understand that there are interests beyond themselves which have a strong claim on their services—prayers and liberality. There is, alas! a latent spirit of indifference among Christians, which seems to ask, "Am I my brother's keeper?" Yet it is an undeniable truth that such interests really exist, and that every congregation of Christian worshippers is a centre from which mission work is to be carried on, with a view to reach certain points beyond. It was thus the Apostles of Jesus went forth from the upper chamber, and spread, as they went, the glad tidings of salvation among Jews and Gentiles. It is thus, too, the people of Christ ought still to do. But although this duty is plain enough, there are many congregations to be found in every religious communion which are actually dead in regard to the claims of missions. It is not a Christian idea to think and say, as is too much the case, that people have done enough when they have agreed to pay a minister a certain sum a year, have provided him with a residence, and have fulfilled all their engagements. Even this is not done in all cases. Many congregations would think it too much. But even granting that it were done in every case, and in every particular, it would not be enough, or anything like it. Why should Christians forget that they are all members of the same great family? Why do they forget that men and women and children are to be converted at our very doors? They do, however, forget this fact, and consequently they never engage in any missionary enterprise—never hear what missionaries are doing—never ask for information on the subject, and never reflect that they themselves could assist those missionaries in conveying the knowledge of Christ to the most distant parts of the earth. It is to be feared, therefore, that there is no spiritual life in those congregations and communities in which no efforts are made in behalf of Christian missions, either at home or abroad. People ought to remember that when they are watering others, they are watered themselves. See, then, that you, as a congregation, being yourselves gathered in from the mission field, be a heavenly fountain, from which shall go forth many delightful streams to gladden other hearts. Let the message of mercy which you have received be echoed back with voices lifted up to God, that others may be made partakers of your joy. Already there is fruit. Let there be more. Let each of you possess the spirit of a true evangelist, and act as a missionary to the spiritually dead around



him. Have zeal for God. Preach His kingdom by your life and walk in the world, and tell the ignorant and the careless the wonders of His love.

*Peace among the members of the flock.* This is another most important subject to which I beg to direct your thoughts. Peace among the members and adherents of a congregation, let me assure you, is essential to its success and prosperity. And perhaps no one understands this better than the minister of a congregation, whose soul must be terribly grieved when he sees his flock kept in a state of constant fermentation by some one who, secretly or openly, acts as the troubler of Israel. Variance, contention, and strife, in a congregation, constitute an aggregate evil against which the most eloquent preacher is powerless, and which the most faithful pastor cannot remedy, even by his greatest attention and assiduity. Jesus has left peace to His people, and it is their duty to live in the thankful enjoyment of it. No good can be effected where it is excluded. Its absence indicates a fearful state of matters. The home or the congregation in which it does not reign must indeed be wretched and miserable. It must be the very habitation of horrid cruelty. Peace is especially desirable among those who not only belong to the same religious faith, but really make up the same congregation. Earnestness and zeal, mingled with consummate prudence and ability on the part of the minister, can accomplish but little, so long as a bad feeling animates and separates those whom the ties of nature and religion alike have made one. The pulpit may be a tower of strength, so far as the preacher is concerned, but strife and envy in a congregation, when they oppose their combined shield, throw back his arrows, however skilfully and powerfully aimed. Peace, therefore, must be within the walls of a congregation, before prosperity can exist within its palaces. But this is not always kept in view, and much harm is done through rash and imprudent utterances, the evil results of which their authors do not anticipate. The affairs of a congregation are not a subject which ought to be treated lightly, and it is not desirable that people should imprudently discuss them whom they do not immediately concern. Unseasonable and angry statements about congregational affairs are always hurtful, and ought to be avoided. Such affairs ought to be managed on business principles, and that in a spirit of peace and wisdom, by persons duly appointed for the purpose. It is wrong, therefore, to introduce private matters, and especially personal quarrels, into the affairs of a Christian congregation. Grievances are very often imaginary, and do not in such cases call for the interference of the Church. It is not wise to insist on redress where really no offence has been given; and even where there is a reasonable ground for demanding redress, it is far better to waive one's right, in order to preserve peace. Whatever private battles any member has to fight, he must not carry on his warfare to the subversion of congregational harmony, and the great discomfort and annoyance of the pastor. And persons whom unforeseen circumstances may have led to disagree ought to settle the matter between themselves, in the spirit of meekness and mutual forbearance which the Gospel dictates, without resorting to the unseemly expedient of dragging each other before the Church and the world. Christ has commanded His people to "forgive men their trespasses," and surely it is at once the interest and duty of His followers to obey Him. There is no getting over this point. No excuse can possibly justify the wilful violation of it. And Christians ought to remember what a perfect model is furnished by His

own spotless life, both in the matter of suffering wrong and of forgiving injuries. In view, therefore, of such a noble example as that which He has set before them, let His people endeavour to imitate Him. And let them also remember that their righteousness must "exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees," otherwise they "shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven." Think on these things, my Christian friends, and pray with all your soul that God would be pleased to unite your hearts in love and peace, that you may be "holy and unblameable, and unreprouable in His sight."

*Sabbath observance.* I need hardly remind you that although "the Sabbath was made for man," it was not intended that it should be desecrated by man. Yet the sin of Sabbath-breaking prevails to an appalling extent. Nor is it confined to any particular class of the community. I shall not, however, expatiate here on the sin in its varied forms. But there is one species which I must notice, though briefly. I mean Sabbath-visiting, which, except in cases of necessity and mercy, is a great evil, and ought to be carefully avoided. Some of you, I fear, must plead guilty here. I cannot deny that I have seen too much of it where I scarcely expected to witness it. I have seen it in the country as well as in the cities. But people have no right to make light of that day which God has been pleased, for the special benefit of His intelligent creatures, to consecrate to His own service. The Sabbath is "the holy of the Lord," and "honourable," and those who profane it by unnecessary travelling have no right to expect happiness in the next world, or even prosperity in the present. Why then should any of you choose the Sabbath for visiting? Is it not a delightful season for devotion and meditation? Or do you apprehend that Sabbath-visiting is justifiable, and brings with it no penalty? You can hardly be of this opinion, if you examine into the matter with any degree of care. If, for instance, you visit your friends on the Sabbath, before divine service, you prevent them, as well as yourselves, from going to the house of God. If, again, you visit them after divine service, any good impressions which you may have received, provided you have attended the sanctuary in the forenoon, are sure to be completely destroyed by the powerful influence of a worldly conversation. Thus it is clear that you sin in either case. It is a well known fact that people do not visit on the Lord's day for the purpose of encouraging each other in faith, love, and good works. That is not the object of these Sabbath visits. And I can only say—and what I do say on this subject is founded on my experience of society in more countries than one—that it is truly revolting to hear people who profess religion at all, keenly discussing the rise and fall of the markets, the price of gold, the discount on silver, and the present aspect and probable development of political affairs. The practice, therefore, of Sabbath visiting is in the highest degree pernicious; for it is obstructive to religion and subversive of morality.

*Sabbath night meetings.* As a general rule, Sabbath night meetings in the country are fraught with great danger, and ought not to be encouraged, except in special circumstances. The intention of holding them may be good; but the propriety is quite another thing. Such meetings are, for the most part, attended by the young, who, on physiological grounds, are easily excited, and are apt, under temporary excitement, to imbibe erroneous notions and views which are powerfully subversive of the true faith. And the adoption of such notions is

wrongly called conversion, though the movement which has led to them was merely animal, not spiritual. Parents and guardians ought therefore to be very careful about the moral and spiritual safety of those whom God has committed to their trust. The Sabbath evening is a most fitting season for the heads of each family to collect around them their household, for the purpose of reading God's Word, the Catechism, and other religious books. I have the best reasons to believe that this kind of exercise would be productive of more real and solid good than could be expected from attending such meetings as I have just mentioned.

*Individual effort.* This subject demands attention, and its importance ought not to be overlooked. It is a power which, if rightly directed, is capable of accomplishing great good. And this is also true of the different parts of the machinery by which the work of a congregation is carried on. The weakness of a congregation, it may be observed, is often considerably increased by the want of individual effort. Many a sound link is excluded from the chain of congregational operation, and many a strong cord is cast aside, and thus much good is lost. It is positively vexing to the soul of an earnest minister to see how unwilling many of his flock are to undertake anything, because they cannot comprehend, or wilfully refuse to comprehend, that they possess individual power to effect any good in the aggregate. They either forget, or do not perceive, that while they are putting forth all the strength of individuality, they are really acting in combination, and that the result of one part is to be looked for in the product of all the parts moved by one and the same impulse, in the action of harmony and unity. Such persons are quite ignorant of their own resources of Christian usefulness. Why do they not try what they can do? Why do they give all their individual activity to the things of the world, while they refuse to give it to the Church? The truth is, they extinguish much light, and miss much good. They do not consider that atoms make up the universe, that drops compose the ocean. They are always asking, "What can I do?" So they remain idle, and never attempt to answer this question. Their talents are hid in the earth, and their services are lost to the congregation and the Church. No appeal to activity can rouse them out of their slumber. They are unwilling to risk anything, lest they should fail, and people laugh at them; and so they do nothing, because they cannot understand how a constant flow of individual effort can become a great moral or spiritual river, whose pure streams God directs and blesses for good.

*Unity of effort.* If congregations have suffered from the want of individual effort, they have certainly done so from the want of Christian unity among their own members. Of this melancholy and disgraceful fact it is quite unnecessary to give instances; nor need I adduce any arguments to prove that of which evidences are everywhere found. Let me then remind you that unity of effort, as well as of purpose, is absolutely necessary in carrying on successfully the business of a congregation. It is a fatal mistake to let the whole weight of congregational matters fall on one man. He may be able, and as willing as he is able, to bear the whole weight, but it is neither safe nor just to lean on him. And I would here explain the reason of this. In the first place, it is not safe to make him the sole prop, because his love may grow cold, or he may take offence, and in an unseasonable hour cut the congregational ship adrift, while the crew

are sleeping; or he may change his opinions, or his circumstances may change for the worse, and leave him no option but to shift the burden to others shoulders, on which perhaps no congregational responsibility has ever rested. And in the second place, it is not just to overburden him, or overtax his liberality, to save the pockets of those whose hearts are not "enlarged." It is unfair, nay, it is altogether wrong, to enjoy the benefits of a settled ministry at the expense of our neighbours. It is therefore the duty, as well as the privilege, of every member of a congregation to take his share of pecuniary responsibility, and to bear his due proportion of congregational work. Why this is not so, and why members of the same flock are shy and jealous of each other, and so refuse to coöperate, might be explained on various grounds, into the examination of which I cannot enter in this place. The work of a congregation is often very heavy. It is always heavy wherever any good results are at all attempted, and any spiritual life exists; and therefore all the members ought to be united in their efforts to do good. Every Christian congregation is a family, and its members must not be opposed to each other. They ought to remember that "a house divided against itself cannot stand." And the very thought of this should lead to a steady unity of effort among them. All the work on ship-board is not done by the captain, and all the work of an army in the field is not done by the general. In both cases there is a fair division of labour. Upon a like principle the work of a congregation ought to be distributed over all the members composing it, so as to compel each to do his part. Let every one of you, therefore, stand at his post, and do his work, and let all help one another, and provoke one another to holy love and good works, even according as they have grace and opportunity. "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ."

*Idle Speaking.* This is an evil of great magnitude, and is productive of immense injury to the cause of truth. Even when good men are most on their guard they are often assailed by this carnal weapon. Idle talk is like "the snare of the fowler, and the noisome pestilence." It entangles its victim so that he cannot release himself. It also slays its victim by a secret and wasting process. Its noisy torrents roll through every circle, and its cruel ravages are witnessed on every side. Many a precious Sabbath evening is wasted by the multitudes who have been beguiled into the habit of indulging in it. Thousands talk on without any apparent object, and pour forth streams of vanity, as if God had given man language to be wasted on mere trifles. It is really sickening to listen to the conversation of some people. It has no point, no interest, no meaning. It is vain, vapid, childish, foolish. But in whatever manner the outside world may act, levity of speech is not for the true Christian, who must studiously "abstain from all appearance of evil." Little do many of Christ's people know how narrowly they are watched, and how anxious an ungodly world is to turn even an apparent inconsistency as an argument against the reality of their faith, and the purity of their life. They must therefore be guarded against utterances of a light character, which would betray their want of that gravity and mental soberness, which they ought, under all circumstances, to maintain. Take heed therefore that you do not offend in word, any more than in action, and be ye "holy in all manner of conversation." "Shun profane and vain babblings, for they will increase unto more ungodliness."

*Gossip.* This is a vice against which the members of a Christian congregation ought to be well on their guard. While there is a close relationship between idle talk and gossip, they are at the same time widely different. By indulging in idle talk, people do not necessarily intend to injure their neighbours, but gossip indicates, generally speaking, a purpose to inflict an injury on others. Generally speaking, people are not afraid of being detected in idle talk, but they invariably lay an embargo on gossip, and manifest a strong disposition to keep it under hatches. In other words, they know that gossip is a wicked practice, and that it is strongly calculated to disturb peace, create enmity, and destroy friendship. It has broken up families, kindled up neighbourhoods, and scattered congregations. It professes to have all knowledge, and to be in possession of all secrets. It has invaded the palace and the sanctuary, and attacked the prince and the peasant. It is a vicious and low habit, worthy of universal condemnation. A noble and generous mind will always scorn it, much more so a mind enlightened and sanctified by the Holy Spirit. But, alas the world has not yet learned to let the affairs of other people alone. Even in congregations the evil results of gossip are too often felt. The outer world does not seem to be able to furnish sufficient materials for gossip, for it is found that the affairs of the sanctuary are dragged from their solitude, and are then perverted, misrepresented and exaggerated in a thousand forms. All this is a great sin and calls for reproof. Can a Christian people not find work to occupy their time and their thoughts without profaning sacred things by speaking of them in an irreverent manner? Why should any one delight in mischief, and carry the torch of revenge and private spite into the house of the Lord? Yet the gossip is capable of this, and does it. He penetrates every secret, abuses confidence, insinuates evil against others, calls "light darkness, and darkness light, good evil, and evil good," sets neighbour against neighbour, and "separateth chief friends." He carries danger with him wherever he goes. He is like a fire-ship in the midst of a fleet. "Under his tongue is mischief and vanity." Death follows in his path. His character is contemptible, and those who wish to enjoy peace, and to preserve self-respect, must refuse to accept his society, under any circumstances. Take heed therefore that no such person may be found among you, and pray that you may be "kept secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues."

*Acquaintance with the principles and government of your own Church,*— It is of the highest importance for the members of a congregation to be well versed in the principles and government of their own Church, while at the same time, it would be an additional advantage to know something about those of other Churches. It is to be very much regretted that many people are so ignorant of the doctrines and practice of their own Church, that they cannot define her position, or even say a single word in her defence when they hear her enemies assailing her. This unpardonable ignorance arises from a want of early training, and also from not remedying this defect by subsequent reading. Were people one-tenth as earnest in reading about the Church and her principles, her government and work, as they are in studying the fanatical politics of the day, they should soon find themselves learned in ecclesiastical polity. The knowledge of one's own Church has a claim on every individual who professes to be in communion with that Church. Yet that claim is not regarded, and the result is that tens of thousands cannot tell you to what Church they belong, or why they prefer any

one Church to another. There are also many who have not the moral courage to make use of even the little knowledge which they have of their own Church, and who listen to all that is said against her, as if it afforded them pleasure instead of pain. But Christians need not be the less tolerant towards other denominations, because they love their own Church dearly, and are prepared to uphold her, and to defend her worship and her laws from calumny. In order therefore to be better informed, and also better armed, each family in a congregation ought to have some work on Church History. And this help is within easy reach of all, because even popular works on Church History are numerous, and can be purchased at a very low price. It is therefore a gross shame for any man to be without such a medium of information on a subject of great importance to a Christian people. In addition to a few of the class of books above indicated, you ought to read *Missionary Literature*, which you must expect to find useful in respect to matter, rather than brilliant in style. But more especially you ought to subscribe to the *Missionary Record* of your own Church, in which a great deal of most useful information is given at a very small cost. And I rejoice that our own Church is not a whit behind any other in the Dominion in her efforts to place ecclesiastical and missionary intelligence within the reach of all her people, from the richest to the poorest. With great pleasure therefore I strongly recommend to you that excellent monthly periodical, the *Presbyterian*, which is superior in many respects to most of its competitors in the Dominion. It is ably and judiciously conducted, is entirely free from narrow-mindedness, and, with becoming dignity, refuses to be the medium of personal attack; while at the same time its pages are always open to fair and honourable discussion on all topics that fall within its range.

*Catechism.* In connection with what has just been said, a few words about the Shorter Catechism may not be considered to be out of place. The frequent and careful perusal of the Catechism is of great consequence not only to the young, but also to the old. The Catechism is an excellent summary of Christian doctrine. It has stood the test and triumphed. It is in every sense a good book, a valuable treasury of Bible knowledge, and it therefore deserves to be well and piously studied. It is this book, accompanying, as it does, the Bible in the Parish Schools of Scotland, that furnishes the Scottish Christian with those glorious land marks of which he never loses sight, whether he still lives in his native village, where the pure sea-waves sparkle in the sun-light, or toils in a foreign land, nobly fulfilling the destiny of his being. In his pilgrimage from North to South, and from East to West, he remembers with delight how often that little book told him "what is the chief end of man." But these deep and lasting impressions are the result of early training in the principles of religion. It is therefore with a true sense of its many excellencies, that I strongly recommend you all to study it. Every one of your children ought to have a copy of it; and you ought to make them repeat a certain number of questions every Sabbath evening.—You would find this a more profitable exercise than reading the newspapers, and discussing political, commercial and agricultural questions, a practice against which I feel myself called upon to bear my most unequivocal testimony.

*Baptism.* It is to be much and deeply regretted that many who profess to differ from those who conscientiously hold the doctrine of adult baptism, and do not accept any other, allow their children to grow up unbaptized. This breach

of duty admits of no plea, and must be traced to sheer carelessness and indifference. Parents who are guilty of this deliberate infraction of a divine command, cannot give any satisfactory explanation of their conduct, in thus inflicting on their children a grievous wrong. Explanations have been attempted, but they hitherto have been feeble, quite unsound, and utterly unworthy of Christian parents. And let it be distinctly understood, that I am here speaking of parents who firmly believe in the doctrine of Infant Baptism. I am speaking to Presbyterians. The Church does not ask unqualified parents to present their infants in baptism; but she asks such fathers and mothers why they are unqualified, and wilfully remain unprepared to perform a commanded duty. And the Church has a right to rebuke them for their gross and inexcusable negligence. She has just reason to complain that all is not well, when she sees careless parents shift the responsibility which really belongs to themselves, to their poor children, who are thus made to suffer. And besides, the Church, in her anxiety to feed the lambs of the flock, as she is commanded by her Lord and King to do, asks who is doing wrong and who is suffering. If you therefore believe that Infant Baptism is a Scriptural Doctrine, why are there many among you who still hesitate to consecrate their little children to the Lord Jesus Christ in baptism? You know very well that by this ordinance the children of Christian parents are publicly received into the visible Church; and why do you deny them the privilege to which they are so justly and so fully entitled? Save them, therefore, from the reflection which must be painful to them in after life, that they had never been baptised "into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." The whole subject, indeed, is one of great moment, and your prayerful attention should be cordially given to it.

*The Lord's Supper.* The painful and stubborn indifference which universally prevails regarding the observance of this sacrament, is most deplorable, and to the ministers of the Gospel it is heart-rending. What can be the cause of this unaccountable and unpardonable neglect? No doubt there is some cause of it, but there can be no excuse for it. How is it that there are so few communicants in comparison with the great mass of professing Christians? It is not easy to understand how the professors of the Christian faith can feel no shame, and apprehend no danger, while, with their eyes and ears open, they bid defiance to their Lord's express command, a command which is at once a positive law, and a moral precept. This special command powerfully appeals to the inner sense, the love and obedience of Christ's people. It was given in circumstances of peculiar solemnity, when as yet the Messianic Church was but small, and the tree of her expanding faith was only taking root. It was a command to "take and eat," to receive by an inward faith the emblems of the Great Sacrifice. It was given with an authority which cannot be evaded or set aside. In respect to all this there can be no difficulty. Everything, indeed, is perfectly clear, both as regards the institution of the Sacrament, and also the observance of it. And yet the soul of the pastor is often filled with the deepest sorrow at seeing the wretched apathy of multitudes in reference to the celebration of the Lord's Supper, and at witnessing the amazing ignorance they display when they attempt to justify their wilful and persistent neglect of the ordinance. Can the faithful and zealous pastor fail to be anxious, so long as such spiritual coldness exists before his very eyes? His earnest invitations meet with no response. His

instructions and encouragements to sinners seem to produce no effect. He pleads in Christ's name, and he sees that people hang down their heads. But he sees what is even worse. He sees, to his horror, that Christ's words are quite disregarded. Surely, then, religion cannot be in a healthy state, where the highest of all religious duties are habitually neglected. The path of safety lies in obeying your Heavenly Master. But how can you say that you love Him, if you are still refusing to do what He has commanded you? And it may be further stated, that ignorance of the nature and design of the Lord's Supper is not more justifiable than a studied contempt of its public observance. The whole subject, as it is exhibited in Scripture, is very plain and intelligible, and the ministers of Christ earnestly endeavour to remove such difficulties as present themselves to the weak.

I now close these remarks by urging you to study most carefully the sacraments of the New Testament, and to consider well whether it is consistent with your Christian profession to dispense with them as means of salvation, for they have certainly been appointed by the Head of the Church with a view to that end.

There are other topics to which I would fain call your attention, such as congregational singing, congregational societies, &c., but I must defer them to a future time, with the promise to give you at the commencement of next year, if I am spared in health, a small volume entitled, "A Book for my Flock, and others who choose to read it." "Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen."



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